

# **Aggression to Apathy: Public Opinion and the Philippine Question**

Research Thesis

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In 1898 the United States declared war on Spain amid widespread support by the American public. Years before the United States had entered into the conflict, the broadly distributed “Yellow Press” newspapers had been drumming up support for American intervention in Spanish-controlled Cuba. The Cuban nationalist cause against Spain and the atrocities committed by Spain in response to the revolution were featured in the American papers since the mid 1890s. The explosion of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana on February 15, 1898, believed by most to be the work of the Spanish, turned the already enthusiastic public into one demanding of retribution, now not only for Cubans’ injustices but Americans’ as well.<sup>1</sup>

The war began in late April of 1898 and continued until August of the same year. The United States deployed troops to the island of Cuba and to Spain’s other imperial holdings. On April 24<sup>th</sup> Commodore George Dewey was ordered from his station in Hong Kong to the Philippine Islands, where the American fleet quickly won an overwhelming victory over the Spanish navy in the Battle of Manila Bay. With the help of Filipino nationalists American troops took Manila in late August. The first success of the Spanish-American War, accomplished with few American casualties, made Dewey a hero back home.<sup>2</sup> Heroes were also being made in Cuba. Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders, a volunteer regiment, were famous both for their victory at the Battle of San Juan Hill and their embodiment of American manly and rustic ideals. With American military victories at both land and sea, in the Caribbean and Pacific, Spain

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<sup>1</sup> See John Tebbel, *America’s Great Patriotic War with Spain: Mixed Motives, Lies, and Racism in Cuba and the Philippines, 1898-1915* (Manchester Center: Marshall Jones, 1996). Marcus M. Wilkerson, *Public Opinion and the Spanish American War: A Study in War Propaganda* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Russell & Russell, 1967). Bonnie M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest* (U. of Mass. Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Long to Dewey, 4/24/98, Reel 3, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Tebbel, *America’s Great Patriotic War*, 104-120.

conceded. Though disease ravaged the army in Cuba, the American public held on to the glory of the war rather than the horror.<sup>3</sup>

The war with Spain was short and popular, but the complications of the peace settlement signed by Spain and the U.S. in December 1898 quickly changed the opinions and support of many Americans for the McKinley administration. By winning the short war, the U.S. gained the former Spanish territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines for \$20 million and Cuba as a protectorate.<sup>4</sup> While Puerto Rico quickly followed the path of other American territorial acquisitions, and Cuba was partially given the freedom promised her, a war began in the Philippines between the U.S. and the Philippine nationalists striving for their independence. In less than a year, the United States went from a power willing to use force against Spain to guarantee Cuba's independence to one that used force to maintain the Philippines under American control. While Americans were wildly in favor of United States involvement in the Spanish-American War, there was a much more mixed response to the Philippine-American War. The peace treaty with Spain faced much opposition, and the senate did not ratify it until February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1899, and even then it only passed by one vote.<sup>5</sup> "Anti-imperialists" and "pro-expansionists" fervently fought for either granting the Philippines independence or continued United States occupation of the islands.<sup>6</sup>

The Philippine-American War began in early February of 1899, when two American soldiers fired on Filipino insurgents while on patrol in Manila.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. had used the help of Philippine nationalist leader Emilio Aguinaldo, later to be declared the first President of the

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<sup>3</sup> "...the army suffers only 345 deaths from battle, 5,462 are victims of fever..." (in Cuba), Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 253, 305. Also see Gary Gerstle "Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism," *Journal of American History* (1999): 1280-1307.

<sup>4</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 328.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 334-335.

Philippine Republic, to defeat the Spanish not six months previously. Now the United States was engaged in conflict with their old allies.<sup>8</sup> The war that followed left the Philippines devastated, with over 100,000 civilians dead and much of the infrastructure and agriculture of the islands in ruins.<sup>9</sup> The United States military suffered 7,000 combat casualties, with 4,200 of those being deaths.<sup>10</sup> The true extent of the damages of the war did not reach the American public, though in 1902 a Senate committee conducted an investigation into accusations of atrocities committed by American soldiers.<sup>11</sup> The war in the Philippines officially lasted until 1902, when the United States replaced the military government with a civil one, but armed conflict between Filipinos and American forces continued. White supremacy and ideas about civilization featured heavily in the conflict, both on the front and at home. “The Philippine Question,” or what the United States policy in the Philippines should be, continued to be in contention throughout the early 1900s, and was an issue in the 1900 and 1904 presidential elections.

In his article “Reluctant Liberator: Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy of Self-Government and Preparation for Philippine Independence” Stephen Wertheim argues, amongst other things, that public opinion forced the imperialist President Theodore Roosevelt to begin a process of independence for the Philippine Islands. Showing that Roosevelt’s personal views contradicted administration policy, Wertheim seeks an explanation for the assertion in the 1908 State of the

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<sup>8</sup> Aguinaldo sent McKinley a Christmas present in 1898 and as late as December 28, 1898 the American Consul to the Philippines was reminding McKinley that Aguinaldo and the Filipinos were important allies against the Spanish. (O.F. Williams to McKinley, 12/26/98, Reel 5, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.) In January General Otis was communicating with Aguinaldo to try to maintain peace (Series of Military Messages from Otis, Corbin, Dewey, and McKinley, 1/8/99, Reel 5, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

<sup>9</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 407. Richard Welch puts the Filipino noncombatant casualties at 200,000 (*Response to Imperialism*, 42). See Tebbel and Welch for more on Philippine-American War.

<sup>10</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 407.

<sup>11</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 42. For more on atrocities see Richard Welch’s article “American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response” (*Pacific Historical Review*, 1974).

Union that the Philippines would be granted independence “within a generation.” Wertheim states that, “domestic anti-imperialism triggered a profound change in Roosevelt’s thought” about American policy in the Philippines.<sup>12</sup>

Though there was anti-imperial sentiment in the United States, there was also pro-expansion sentiment. The public did not become more anti-imperialistic within Roosevelt’s administration. In this paper, I will examine the press, politics, morals, elections, and views on race and “the Monied interests,” as factors in public opinion that stayed consistent before and during Roosevelt’s years as president. With no public opinion polls to help gage Americans’ views, I have used contemporary newspaper articles and correspondence to William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Jennings Bryan, Albert J. Beveridge, and Joseph Benson Foraker to construct my argument.<sup>13</sup>

Rather than anti-imperial sentiment increasing and being a factor in Roosevelt’s turn away from U.S. involvement in the Philippines, the interest in the debate over imperialism waned during this period. Roosevelt’s 1908 assertions about the Philippines in the State of the Union were consistent with past administration policy. There was no drastic change in public opinion from the beginning of the “Philippine Question” to the end of Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency. While there continued to be both proponents and opponents on the issue of American territorial acquisitions, the importance of the issue and the force with which the two sides clashed faded. Factors influencing public opinion remained fairly constant, and the issue simply lost the attention of the American public.

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Wertheim, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Philosophy of Self-Government and Preparation for Philippine Independence” (*Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39.3, 2009), 516.

<sup>13</sup> I chose these politicians to try and maximize the number of letters and variety of opinion on the subject. All being players in the Philippine debate in some capacity, I hoped that their papers would reveal large numbers of constituents weighing in on the issue.

## The Press

One important factor in public opinion that remained consistent during this period was newspaper reporting. While newspapers continued to be influential and offer opinions about the issues, the information newspapers promoted was more even-keeled than during the Spanish American War, and so was the public's response. Before and during the conflict with Spain, the newspapers circulated accounts of Spanish brutalities as well as speculation about the Spaniards' future plans for the citizens of Cuba and the Philippines. The papers, particularly the New York papers *The World*, *Journal*, *Sun*, and *Herald*, not only disseminated information about injustices being committed against Cuban citizens, but also described injustices against American citizens in Cuba.<sup>14</sup> The popular press's enthusiasm for American intervention in Cuba and their widely publicized stories of the violence and injustice committed by the Spanish drummed up support for United States' involvement abroad. In contrast, popular national newspapers did not commit to either a pro-expansion or anti-imperialist agenda during the Philippine-American War. While certain regional newspapers were vocal about their support or opposition of administration policy, there was no media circus surrounding the war. Both the content of the newspapers and the public's reaction to them remained consistent from the end of the Spanish-American War through 1908.

Unlike the mostly one-sided uproar from the Hearst papers before and during the war with Spain, the opinions being presented during the Philippine-American War were more neutral and varied. Many local newspapers were either pro-expansion or anti-imperialist depending on their support for the Republican or Democratic Party, and this stayed fairly consistent throughout the period. By just reading one local newspaper it would be possible for an individual to learn only one viewpoint on the subject, but the national press was varied enough that the information

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<sup>14</sup> Wilkerson, *Public Opinion and the Spanish American War*, 35.

presented to the public was not nearly as one-sided as during the Spanish-American War. In 1899 the *San Francisco Call* ran a large editorial section titled “Time to End the War in the Philippines,” with subheadings “The Failure of Otis to Grasp the Situation” (Otis at this time was the major general), and “The People Grow Weary of Slaughter.”<sup>15</sup> On the pro-expansion side, the Atlanta paper *The Sunny South* in 1899 whole-heartedly backed the McKinley administration’s assertions that American good government in the Philippines would certainly help the country.<sup>16</sup> Other newspapers, like the Illinois paper *Urbana Daily Courier*, the Alabama *Pratt City Herald*, and the Iowa *Fort Dodge Messenger* had few editorials about the Philippines. In 1901 the *Pratt City Herald* ran a piece about the potential riches of the Philippines, but the rest of their stories regarding the Philippines conflict were limited to reports from the War Department and reprints of stories from national newspapers.<sup>17</sup> While these papers did run stories about events occurring overseas, they were mostly wire transfers from national press sources, short, and lacking a clear political viewpoint.<sup>18</sup>

This trend of either reporting from an anti-imperial or pro-expansion viewpoint or short articles focusing on events persisted throughout the period. In 1904 the *San Francisco Call* was still firmly on the anti-imperialist side, running an article praising the Democratic nominees and their support of Philippine Independence.<sup>19</sup> In 1902 the *Sunny South* was still pushing the

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<sup>15</sup> *San Francisco Call*, 6/18/1899, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

<sup>16</sup> *The Sunny South*, 2/11/1899, Atlanta Historic Newspapers.

<sup>17</sup> *Pratt City Herald*: “News From Distant Lands: Americans in the Philippines, Sweeping Everything Before Them” (3/18/1899, Birmingham Public Library Digital Collections); “Skirmishes in Philippines: robbers repulsed and pursued – 200 Spanish prisoners released,” “The Campaign in Luzon” (1/20/1900, Birmingham Public Library Digital Collections).

<sup>18</sup> *Urbana Daily Courier*: “Situation in Philippines: Bands of Raiders at Surigao, Mindanao, Practically Dispersed- And Other Points” (4/18/1903, Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections), “Fighting in the Philippines” (3/20/1904, Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections), “Still Disorder in the Philippines” (12/13/1905, Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections). *Fort Dodge Messenger*: stories from *Wall Street Journal*, Fort Dodge Public Library.

<sup>19</sup> “Democratic nominee declares for gold standard, tariff revision and independence of Philippines.” *San Francisco Call*, 8/11/04, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

heroism of soldiers fighting in the Philippines and the economic opportunities available there.<sup>20</sup>

The neutral *Urbana Daily Courier* in December of 1905 reported that there was “Still Disorder in the Philippines,” though nothing to really be concerned about.<sup>21</sup> From the beginning of the Philippine-American War through Roosevelt’s 1908 State of the Union, local newspapers continued the same reporting trends.

Unlike in their coverage of the Spanish-American War, the mainstream newspapers did not strongly back one side of the debate on the Philippine Question. While William Randolph Hearst’s papers strongly favored intervention in Cuba, they did not come out with a strong stance during the Philippine-American War. In an 1899 letter responding to William Jennings Bryan, Hearst confided that he was against Philippine independence and believed Filipinos should become citizens of the United States.<sup>22</sup> While he was open with this viewpoint to Bryan, the Hearst papers did not use the same propaganda techniques used during the Spanish-American War to promote this viewpoint. Like local newspapers, “the nation’s leading periodicals were fairly evenly divided on... McKinley’s Philippine policy, though with editorial advocates probably enjoying a small majority.”<sup>23</sup> Unlike the previous conflict, “the strident voices of Hearst and Pulitzer were strangely silent in this controversy...”<sup>24</sup>

Though they were publishing fewer antagonistic articles, newspapers were still important to public opinion, and politicians understood their influence. The McKinley administration continued to be wary of what the newspapers were reporting and how the public would be

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<sup>20</sup>*The Sunny South*: 5/10/1902 “Ranks of our Philippine Army Filled with Unknown Heroes,” 4/5/1902 “American Capital Will Develop Philippine Mineral and Farming Interests,” Atlanta Historic Newspapers.

<sup>21</sup> *Urbana Daily Courier*, 12/13/1905, Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections.

<sup>22</sup> Hearst to Bryan, 1899, Box 23, Folder 17, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>23</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 130.

<sup>24</sup> Tebbel, *America’s Great Patriotic War*, 310.



influenced by it. O.F. Williams, an American consul in the Philippines, wrote McKinley in late 1898 stating, "... a yellow journal may thwart your plans- change a congress- bar army appropriations, resulting in disastrous and disgraceful failure in the Orient."<sup>25</sup> After the influence of the press in the Spanish-American War, the administration was concerned that they would take an active role in influencing the public on Philippine policy.

Even in newspapers that did not come down against administration policy, there were reports on the atrocities taking place in the Philippines. In 1899 a soldier writing home from his station in Manila complained to his father that the newspapers were overreacting and making the violence of the war sounds worse than it was. "...The newspapers (inspired by some idiotic 'volunteer' who had been 'hitting the opium pipe' and looking for notoriety) fume and 'stamp about' in supposed righteous indignation, and 'demand the recall of General Otis.'"<sup>26</sup> While the soldier felt that the attention was unwarranted, stories of American atrocities against Filipinos continued to be reported, and a Senate Investigatory Committee took up the issue in 1902. Roosevelt, in his 1902 State of the Union, addressed and admitted to wrongdoing by American forces, saying that, "...occasional instances of cruel retaliation occurred" during the war. Though "every effort has been made to prevent such cruelties" and the administration claimed that, "these efforts have been completely successful" in stopping such behavior, violence against Filipino citizens was reported through 1906.<sup>27</sup> While some stories of atrocities did reach the United States public, many did not. Reporters in the Philippines complained of censorship by the military.<sup>28</sup> Without newspapers reporting the atrocities that did get through the censors, public

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<sup>25</sup> O.F. Williams to McKinley, 12/28/98, Reel 5, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>26</sup> Frank, an American soldier, to his father, 9/4/1899, Reel 8, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt, Annual Address 1902, Theodore-Roosevelt.com.

<sup>28</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 344.

concern might never have necessitated the administration admitting to wrongdoing by American soldiers. That being said, while there was an investigation in 1902, newspapers continued reporting atrocities without a significant uproar from the American public.

The public, too, understood newspapers' influence. However, many Americans were cautious of the information being presented to them. The sensational yellow press of the Spanish-American War made many Americans question the validity of news stories. While the newspapers were creating interest in the conflict with Spain, the American public did not wholeheartedly buy into all of the stories the press were publishing. The *Vermont Standard*, praising a politician's matter of fact speech on the subject in 1898 said that, "the majority of people did not know how much was true and how much exaggeration" in the press.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, during the Philippine-American War, the public felt that they could not fully trust the press. Writing in praise of Albert J. Beveridge's pro-expansion speech about the Philippines in 1900, several supporters expressed similar sentiments. Enoch G. Hogate said that he felt like he could actually trust Beveridge's statements as facts.<sup>30</sup> W.M. Nelson, responding to the same speech, also stated that he felt like he could trust Beveridge.<sup>31</sup> Though they still read and were influenced by the press, in some cases Americans turned to and trusted individuals more than the newspapers.

This issue of trust could have stemmed from the unintentional misrepresentations printed by the newspapers. In 1905, the *New York Times* reported opposing stories within months of each other. In late January, they reported William Howard Taft as agreeing with the statement

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<sup>29</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Enoch G. Hogate to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/10/1900, Box 127, Folder H, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>31</sup> W.M. Nelson to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/11/1900, Box 127, Folder N, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

that he “believe[d] in granting self-government when the people are ready...”<sup>32</sup> Then, not even three months later in March, they ran a story with the headline “TO RETAIN PHILIPPINES INDEFINITELY --- TAFT; Secretary of War Announces This as Administration's Policy.” The article was adapted from a letter Taft made public “in order to allay any misapprehension relative to the policy of the Administration with respect to the future of the Philippines.” While the article does not directly contradict his previous statements, it amends granting the Philippines self-government when they are ready to determining the future American course of action once Filipinos are capable of self-government.<sup>33</sup> In addition to this inconsistent information from the administration, Americans were told from the beginning of the conflict that the war would be over in a short time. An 1899 article stated that in the opinion of one of Dewey’s commanders, “the trouble in the Philippines will not be of long duration.”<sup>34</sup> Throughout the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the administration and newspaper headlines continued to promise that peace in the Philippines was right around the corner.<sup>35</sup> In 1902, an editorial in the *Washington Post* poked fun at the administrations of Roosevelt and McKinley, saying that the war had been “brought to an end on six different occasions.”<sup>36</sup>

During the Philippine-American War and the years following it, newspapers in the United States remained fairly consistent in their coverage of the situation in the Philippines. The only change in the newspapers seems to be a result of the lack of public interest. After the uproar over American atrocities in 1902, the interest in the Philippines lessened. Discussing the newspaper coverage after the 1902 senate investigation, Richard Welch states, “public concern

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<sup>32</sup> *The New York Times*, 1/30/05, NYT Online Archive.

<sup>33</sup> *The New York Times*, 3/17/05.

<sup>34</sup> “DEWEY AND THE FILIPINOS; A Talk with Lieut. Commander Rees of the Admiral's Flagship,” *The New York Times*, 3/6/1899.

<sup>35</sup> Annual Address, 1902, 1905.

<sup>36</sup> Paul A. Kramer, "Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine American War as Race War." *Diplomatic History* 30.2 (2006): 169-210.

did not disappear overnight, but it gradually fell victim to emotional fatigue and apathy.”<sup>37</sup> While interest in the Philippine conflict and coverage in print media lessened, important news stories from the Philippines still made it to the national press. Even as late as 1906, stories of atrocities in the Philippines continued to make the news.<sup>38</sup> The stories the newspapers were presenting still contained the same kind of information as they did 10 years previously, but rather than stirring anti-imperialist sentiment they were falling upon uninterested ears.

### **Morals**

The moral obligations of the American public were continually called upon during the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, and the duties of Christian and patriotic Americans were invoked to support both the pro-expansion and anti-imperialist viewpoints. The importance of moral duty and sense of obligation on both sides were important factors in influencing how the public perceived the Philippine situation. Christian principles and patriotic actions were essential parts of many Americans’ identities, and these beliefs would not change over 10 years of debate.

The sense of duty Americans felt and were asked to contemplate as Christians played an important role in shaping opinions. On the pro-expansion side, proponents of the administration’s Philippines policy argued that bringing civilization to the Filipinos was an act of Christian charity. In response to Albert J. Beveridge’s speech advocating for the United States’ control of the Philippines, an admirer wrote, “...it certainly makes plain our duty as a Christian nation, to our unfortunate brothers in the gateway to the Orient.”<sup>39</sup> Advocates of an expansionist

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<sup>37</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 145.

<sup>38</sup> Massacre of 900 Moro men, women, and children (Tebbel, *American’s Great Patriotic War*, 410).

<sup>39</sup> F.F. Drake to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/10/1900, Box 127, Folder D, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

policy also invoked the importance of missionary work in the Philippines, and the idea of a civilized, Christian nation saving a pagan, savage one was a common trope.<sup>40</sup> Though, as William Jennings Bryan pointed out in a letter to Andrew Carnegie, many Filipinos were already Catholic from the centuries of Spanish colonial rule, the impression still persisted and added to the idea that Americans had a Christian duty to maintain control of the Philippines and “convert” the natives to civilized Christians.<sup>41</sup>

Pro-expansionists also justified American control of the Philippines by appealing to the ideas of fate and destiny. This line of thinking was also employed during the Spanish-American War to justify intervention in Cuba. In an unsigned memo to the McKinley administration detailing reasons for intervention, the opening line reads, “God placed Cuba a segregated part of the Spanish realm, and distant from the parent Country, right next to our own shores.”<sup>42</sup> The idea that God willed it that the U.S. occupation of the Philippines occurred, and that this was a sign that American control of the country should continue, was also used as justification for pro-expansionists. In a letter to Beveridge, one pro-expansionist wrote that, “the hand of destiny is at work clearly pointing out to us our opportunity for the advancement of civilization and the basic principles upon which civilizations stands.”<sup>43</sup> Destiny and fate, specifically the popular concept of Manifest Destiny, influenced and convinced pro-expansionists that their viewpoint was correct. In an 1898 letter to McKinley at the beginning of the Philippine question, a friend posited, “If we are equal to the demands of our Manifest Destiny, I see before this country a

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<sup>40</sup> S.C. Campbell to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/11/1900, Box 127, Folder C, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>41</sup> William Jennings Bryan to Andrew Carnegie, 1/30/1899, Box 22, Folder 8, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>42</sup> Memo, 1898, Reel 3, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>43</sup> William R. Carwnie to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/11/1900, Box 127, Folder C, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

future such that our past could not suggest.”<sup>44</sup> To many pro-expansionists, the Philippines were just another step in the American destiny to expand territory. The War and resistance of Filipinos were trials that had to be won, just like the Indian Wars of the American West, to spread American civilization and achieve the greatness designated by God.

Anti-imperialists also used Christian morals to back their viewpoint. Rather than viewing the situation as an example of Christian charity or Manifest Destiny, they viewed the warfare and suppression of Filipino rights as anything but Christian. Anti-imperialists felt that Christian Americans should sympathize with the plights of the less fortunate Filipinos and attempt to stop their subjugation. A supporter congratulated William Jennings Bryan about his speech on anti-imperialism, saying that it was “appealing to Christian conscience.”<sup>45</sup> Americans with anti-imperialist leanings also felt the Philippine situation called upon them to act as Christians, but against administration policy, not in favor of.

Patriotism was also an important moral duty that shaped Americans’ opinions. Fresh from the “Great patriotic war with Spain,” Americans continued to place a high importance on patriotism and patriotic duty. Pro-expansionists called upon the duty of Americans to their president. The symbol of patriotism for many was the American flag, and those in favor of administration policy used this symbolism to help justify the Philippine policy and gain public support. Pro-expansionists felt that once the American flag was raised, it was Americans’ duty to honor and protect the place over which it flew. Wherever the American flag was raised was American land. Americans expressed that, “patriotic citizens believe in holding up the hands of

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<sup>44</sup> Frances Booker to William McKinley, Reel 3, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>45</sup> George R. Wendling to William Jennings Bryan, 8/12/1900, Box 25, Folder 6, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

our heroic President and sustaining the flag wherever it floats.”<sup>46</sup> The belief that “the people will rally to the support of the flag and the McKinley administration” was expressed by pro-expansionists with conviction, as many believed support of the flag and the president was a patriotic duty.<sup>47</sup>

Patriotism was also used as a reason to side with the anti-imperialists. Anti-imperialists felt that administration policy was anti-American. One supporter of Bryan felt that, “McKinley’s flagrant, heartless violation of the Declaration of Independence, his complete ignoring of the foundation principles upon which our republic is founded” was ruining the integrity of the United States.<sup>48</sup> Another supporter expressed that he was “earnestly hoping as patriotic Americans, as we consider ourselves, that the present danger may pass without inflicting injury upon our national character ...”<sup>49</sup> For anti-imperialists, supporting the McKinley administration’s un-American policies was unpatriotic. In their view, the patriotic American was one who understood and defended the natural rights of the Filipinos. For the 1900 presidential campaign, Bryan staffers attempted to counter the McKinley administration’s use of the flag as a symbol of American patriotic necessity to keep the Philippines by changing the imagery associated with the flag. “This is the Flag of the Republic – not an Empire” and, “It shall wave over States, not Provinces – over Freemen, not Vassals” were two phrases they suggested as ways to convince Americans that supporting the administration was the wrong decision.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Albert H. Bridgman to Albert J. Beveridge, 2/19/1900, Box 128, Folder B, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Hernley to Albert J. Beveridge, 9/29/1898, Box 120, Folder 8, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>48</sup> Bennett to William Jennings Bryan, 9/21/1899, Box 23, Folder 10, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>49</sup> Ralston and Siddons, Attorneys & Counselors at Law to William Jennings Bryan, 2/3/1899, Box 22, Folder 9, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>50</sup> William J. Stone to William Jennings Bryan, 5/13/1900, Box 24, Folder 6, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

While duty to the Christian God and the United States were incredibly important to Americans, so was the idea of duty and responsibility itself. Having purchased the Philippines during the treaty with Spain, it was now the duty of the United States to produce a civilized and stable nation. Writing to Theodore Roosevelt in 1905, one constituent explained America's duty in the Philippines by saying that, "having put our hands to the plow we will not turn back."<sup>51</sup> To a supporter of Beveridge, "the duty of the American-citizen regarding the Philippines is so clearly defined" that it seemed to the author to be written as though it were a commandment.<sup>52</sup> While the exact nature of the responsibility the United States had to the Filipinos depended on opinion, Americans felt that the disorder in the Philippines, caused both by Spanish and American policy and by the Philippine reaction to such policies, was the United States' problem to solve. As Theodore Roosevelt often said, if anything was un-American it was the shirking of duties, and the United States had a duty to carry out in the Philippines.

Christian morals, patriotism, and duty were all linked for Americans at the turn of the century. As one McKinley supporter wrote the president, "having once acquired control of the Philippines, many patriotic and intelligent Americans think that as a Christian people we cannot shirk from the responsibility of giving them good government and the advantages of civilization."<sup>53</sup> The importance of being a good dutiful Christian and a good dutiful patriot was paramount for many Americans, and this did not change during or after the Philippine-American War. People were either convinced one way or the other by arguments appealing to their patriotism or Christian conscience. Yet while morality was central for many Americans, it was

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<sup>51</sup> Luke E. Wright to Theodore Roosevelt, n.d., Reel 46, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>52</sup> Julian M. Martin to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/10/1900, Box 127, Folder M, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>53</sup> John McCook to William McKinley, 11/26/1898, Reel 5, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



not enough to keep attention on the Philippine situation. The moral aspects of the Philippine question were important, but apparently not significant enough to combat the boredom that came with 10 years of the same debate.

### **The Monied Interests**

Americans were concerned about the influence of the trusts and “The Monied Interests,” or corporations that influenced politics, throughout the time period. Both anti-imperialists and pro-expansionists were anxious about the sway that rich elites had over the administration’s actions. This domestic issue translated into concern about international policy, and remained a consistent apprehension for Americans.

William Jennings Bryan received support for his anti-imperialist and anti-trust stances, and in many ways these two things were thought to go hand in hand. An advisor told Bryan in 1899 that if, “you [Bryan] confine your talks to imperialism and trusts, you could carry New York, New Jersey and Connecticut on these issues in 1900...”<sup>54</sup> A month later he further supported this opinion, saying that Bryan’s most popular stances were those on imperialism and trusts.<sup>55</sup> Americans were wary of trusts and the “monied interests” in general during this time, and Roosevelt would become very popular for his “trust-busting” in the early 1900s. For some anti-imperialists, corporate influence in politics could be seen by the administration’s policies in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Maintaining American control of the Philippines opened up business and trade opportunities in the Pacific, something the pro-expansionists cited as a benefit of administration policy. Anti-imperialists, however, felt that American corporations were

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<sup>54</sup> P.S. Bennett to William Jennings Bryan, 2/20/1900, Box 22, Folder 10, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>55</sup> P.S. Bennett to William Jennings Bryan, 3/23/1900, Box 22, Folder 12, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

putting pressure on the administration for potential profits. In a criticism of McKinley, one Bryan supporter expressed McKinley's "willingness... to put the dollar above the man" and "to carry out a scheme to rob a friendly people of their freedom, in order to satisfy a commercial spirit."<sup>56</sup> One particularly fervent anti-imperialist wrote of a "nightmare of greed" and "satanic corporations" influencing the "murderous war on the Filipinos."<sup>57</sup> To anti-imperialists, the monied interests had influence over the administration and were a factor behind McKinley and Roosevelt's policy of American involvement in the Philippines.

Pro-expansionists, too, expressed concern over the wealthy's influence on administration policy. Worry about undue influence by corporations became central to the issue of tariffs in America's new territories. In 1900, a proposed tariff on Puerto Rico caused many Americans to write to their Senator in alarm. While Albert J. Beveridge was an ardent pro-expansionist and so were many of his constituents, writers disagreed with the proposed Puerto Rico tariff because of both the principle of the tariff itself and the reasons they felt were behind it. Some Americans felt that establishing a tariff against Puerto Rico, allegedly an American territory like Arizona or New Mexico, was illogical and illegal.<sup>58</sup> Their understanding was that the territories gained from the Spanish-American War would be just like those gained from the Mexican-American War. Americans felt that the trusts and protected industries were swaying the McKinley administration and congressmen to impose the illogical tariff to protect American sugar and tobacco

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<sup>56</sup> Bennett to William Jennings Bryan, 9/21/1899, Box 23, Folder 10, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>57</sup> B.F. Spencer to Albert J. Beveridge, 1/??/1900, Box 127, Folder S, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>58</sup> Frederick O. Joss to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/13/1900, Box 125, Folder 10, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Mark L. Dickson to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/7/1900, Box 126, Folder 1, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

companies.<sup>59</sup> Discussing the tariff, one constituent expressed that “the people believe that there is something wrong in this proposition. That it is done in the interest of some trust, or body of men, or for the purpose of raising campaign funds, or some other thing that the people will not approve.”<sup>60</sup> Another wrote to Beveridge saying that people believed the tariff to be about trusts, and that their representatives were answering to the trusts, and not their constituents.<sup>61</sup> One writer told Beveridge that “almost to a man” everyone in Indiana was opposed to the tariff against Puerto Rico.<sup>62</sup> The issue of the Puerto Rico tariff was so important to voters that advisors told Beveridge that if the tariff bill passed, the Republicans could lose Indiana in the upcoming election and jeopardize the legitimacy of the pro-expansion movement.<sup>63</sup> The sentiments about tariffs were repeated when the question of tariffs against the Philippines arose, with the New York Times printing that, “it would be as just to establish a tariff between the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania as between the US and the Philippines.”<sup>64</sup>

Americans’ concerns about the influence of trusts and other elites on international policy continued throughout the period, and this concern was something that the administration tried to combat. Theodore Roosevelt addressed the issues of tariffs and the monied interests in his 1902, 1903, 1904, and 1905 State of the Unions. In 1903 and 1905, Roosevelt called for the reduction of the tariff in place against the Philippines, and for there to be free trade between the islands and

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<sup>59</sup> William Campbell to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/2/1900, Box 126, Folder 3, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>60</sup> C.C. Binkley to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/13/1900, Box 125, Folder 2, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>61</sup> Frederick O. Joss to Albert J. Beveridge.

<sup>62</sup> Mark L. Dickson to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/7/1900.

<sup>63</sup> J. Bennett Gordon to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/14/1900, Box 125, Folder 26, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Mark L. Dickson to Albert J. Beveridge, 3/7/1900.

<sup>64</sup> *The New York Times*, 1/30/1905.

the United States.<sup>65</sup> He also addressed the issue of outside influences on administration decisions. In 1904 Roosevelt assured the public that he had “positively refused to permit any discrimination whatsoever for political reasons and have insisted that in choosing the public servants [for the Philippines] consideration should be paid solely to the worth of the men chosen and to the needs of the islands.”<sup>66</sup>

The administration, while addressing public concerns about tariffs and outside influence on governmental decisions, also tried to calm the public’s distrust of the monied interests. In his 1905 State of the Union, Roosevelt addressed these concerns about corporate interests in terms of Philippine policy:

Elsewhere in this message I have spoken strongly against the jealousy of mere wealth, and especially of corporate wealth as such. But it is particularly regrettable to allow any such jealousy to be developed when we are dealing either with our insular or with foreign affairs. The big corporation has achieved its present position in the business world simply because it is the most effective instrument in business competition. In foreign affairs we cannot afford to put our people at a disadvantage with their competitors by in any way discriminating against the efficiency of our business organizations. In the same way we cannot afford to allow our insular possessions to lag behind in industrial development from any twisted jealousy of business success.<sup>67</sup>

Here Roosevelt sums up administration policy on corporate interests in the Philippines. He establishes the legality and fairness of big corporations (“The big corporation has achieved its present position...” ) and then goes on to claim that any “jealousy” felt by Americans should not be allowed to limit companies’ involvement in the economic and industrial development of the Philippines. The Roosevelt administration understood Americans’ wariness of big companies

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<sup>65</sup> Roosevelt, Annual Address, 1904. However, Roosevelt did promote keeping the tariff in place for sugar and tobacco for several more years.

<sup>66</sup> Roosevelt, Annual Address, 1904.

<sup>67</sup> Roosevelt, Annual Address, 1905.

and tried to convince them of the necessity and legality of their involvement abroad. Like his trust policy, Roosevelt asked Americans to depend on him to determine good big business versus bad big business.

Suspicion about undue influence of corporations affected how Americans, both anti-imperialist and pro-expansionist, viewed administration policy. Here the two sides of the debate agreed on an issue, and the Republican administration attempted to respond. Worry about the influence of “the monied interests” remained consistent throughout the period, and would not ultimately sway Roosevelt’s policies.

### **Race**

Before and during the Spanish-American War, conceptions of race saturated the media. Spaniards were depicted as dark-skinned savages, and Cubans were presented as an infantilized people in need of saving.<sup>68</sup> Similar thoughts carried over into the Philippine-American War and influenced how the public viewed the Philippines. Both anti-imperialists and pro-expansionists referred often to the race and general “otherness” of the Filipinos. White supremacy was ingrained in Americans, and the popularity of Social Darwinism helped to drive the public’s perception of the Philippine question. Americans’ views on race, something that certainly influenced perception about international territorial expansion, remained consistent during the debate over the Philippines.

Newspaper stories and editorial cartoons help illustrate the various racial views Americans had about Filipinos. One popular view that was often promoted in the newspapers was that the Filipinos were violent savages, almost completely unrecognizable as human beings.

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War” (*The History Teacher*, 1996).

During the war, editorial cartoons portrayed Filipinos as dark, dirty, and monkey-like.<sup>69</sup> A 1901 newspaper article described Filipinos as near super-human monsters: “So ferocious are the natives that they may be shot through and through by a Krag-Jorgensen bullet, and yet they would fight for some time with unabated ferocity...”<sup>70</sup> White Americans compared Filipinos to Black Americans, and the use of the n-word to describe Filipinos was widespread, especially in the army.<sup>71</sup> Richard Welch bluntly summarizes Americans’ views on Filipinos: “If the American-born black man was judged incapable and so inferior, how much more ‘the Filipino nigger,’ for he was stunted, foreign, and rebellious.”<sup>72</sup>

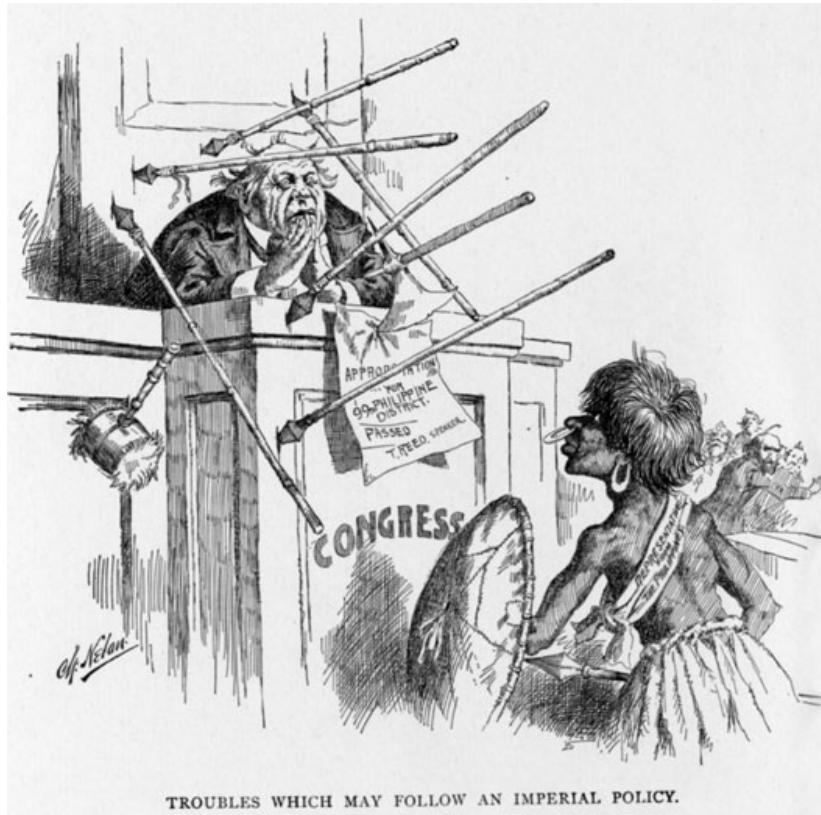
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<sup>69</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 101.

<sup>70</sup> *Dayton Review*, 10/17/1901.

<sup>71</sup> For more see Welch’s article “American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response” *Pacific Historical Review* (1974): 233-253.

<sup>72</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 103. For more on racialization of the Philippine American War see Kramer’s article “Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine American War as Race War.” (*Diplomatic History* 30.2, 2006).



Charles Nelan, Cartoons of Our War with Spain, New York, 1898.

While Filipinos were de-humanized as brutish savages, they were also infantilized. In an article titled “A Study of Philippine Nature” one scientist describes his findings on Filipinos. His ultimate conclusion was that “...we have this people on our hands to take care of, for it is evident that they are incapable of taking care of themselves.”<sup>73</sup> Newspapers presented Filipinos’ brutishness as coming from their unintelligence.<sup>74</sup> They also presented them as lazy and sinful, with one newspaper saying that, “the Indian of Manila is an indolent creature, given up to gambling and cock fighting.”<sup>75</sup> The presentation of Filipinos as simultaneously child-like and monstrous was prominent in the newspapers, and Americans reinforced these ideas in their correspondence. People wrote to their congressmen about the “ignorant savages” in the islands,

<sup>73</sup> *The Sunny South*, 2/11/1899.

<sup>74</sup> *The Dayton Review*, 7/28/1898.

<sup>75</sup> *The Dayton Review*, 7/28/98.

and sustained the idea that they were not fit to govern themselves due at least in part to their innate racial inferiority.<sup>76</sup>

American racial supremacy not only helped justify pro-expansion views, but also maintained the anti-imperialist opinion as well. Bryan himself stated that, “this nation, great as it is, cannot afford to do injustice to any race however distant or feeble.”<sup>77</sup> David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford University, wrote to Bryan that, “Lincoln once said, ‘If slavery is not wrong: nothing is wrong.’ If aggressive war is not wrong: nothing is wrong. If Imperialism, which involves both, is not wrong, nothing is wrong.”<sup>78</sup> In the same letter, he also stated “the United States is in serious danger of the worst thing which can befall a free nation, the adoption of a system of colonies in which inferior races are ruled unwillingly for their own good and for the good of the captors.”<sup>79</sup> Even ardent anti-imperialists were working from the mindset that Filipinos were inferior to Americans. While many anti-imperialists were concerned for the welfare of Filipinos, here Bryan and Jordan show more concern for the consequences that Philippine occupation would have on America than it would have on the Philippines.

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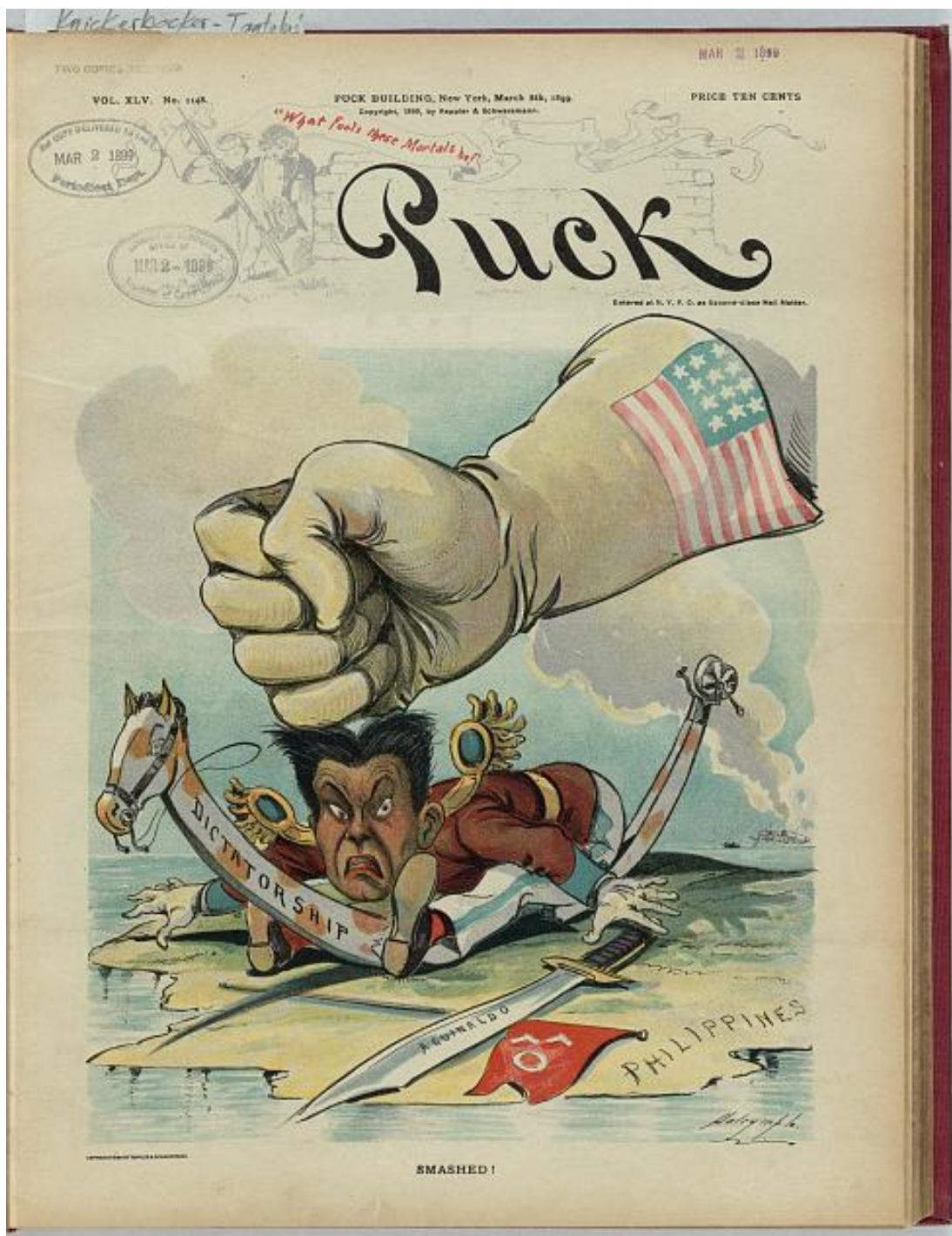
<sup>76</sup> Mrs. O.S. Wissler to William Jennings Bryan, 5/3/1900, Box 24, Folder 13, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Bennett to William McKinley, 4/19/1901, Reel 15, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>77</sup> William Jennings Bryan to the *Journal*, 5/1/1899, Box 23, Folder 1, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>78</sup> David Starr Jordan to William Jennings Bryan, 2/7/1900, Box 24, Folder 2, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.





Here an artist portrays Philippine President Emilio Aguinaldo as an unruly child.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Dalrymple, Louis. *Smashed!* Cartoon. N.Y.: Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1899. Library of Congress, Photos, Prints, and Drawings. Chromolithograph print.

From the beginning of the conflict, the McKinley administration recognized the racially charged aspect of the Cuba and Philippine occupations. In 1898, a report on Cuba testified to the “ignorance of the natives” and referred to them as “poor deluded creatures.”<sup>81</sup> The suggestion of the report was that the United States should retain “guardianship over them... for at least a few years to come.”<sup>82</sup> Concern about the large number of black Cubans also surfaced in opinions to McKinley.<sup>83</sup> One writer in 1901 attributed the “ignorance” of Cubans to the fact that they were “to a man negroes, or of mixed blood.”<sup>84</sup> This same author suggested that, “these people are entirely incompetent to govern themselves and they know it.”<sup>85</sup> This attitude about the racial inferiority of Cubans permeated administration correspondence about the Philippines as well. In 1898, General Hastings submitted to McKinley the opinion that he questioned whether, “the US could satisfactorily govern such a medley of race, ignorance, brutality, and church power” that characterized the Philippines.<sup>86</sup> The administration and pro-expansionists circulated that the United States was involved in the Philippines for “their own good,” and that they were incapable of self-government.<sup>87</sup> These two things were explicitly linked to the racial inferiority of Filipinos.

In 1900, General Wheeler wrote to McKinley describing the state of affairs in the Philippines, and brought up the issue of the use of racial slurs by U.S. soldiers. When discussing

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<sup>81</sup> Barker to William McKinley, 12/28/1899, Reel 9, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>82</sup> Barker to William McKinley, 12/28/1899.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Eisha D. Ely to William McKinley, 4/21/1901, Reel 9, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> General Hastings to William McKinley, 8/22/1898, Reel 4, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>87</sup> Annual Address, 1900, 1901.

the wariness that the non-combatants of the Philippines had towards American occupation, he said, “I regret that some of our officers adopt a bearing towards Filipinos which tends to strengthen this apprehension on their [the Filipinos] part. They call them “Niggers” and speak of them in a contemptuous manner, and I find that such talk is felt very keenly by the people.”<sup>88</sup> Wheeler continued, saying, “I think the offensive words about Filipinos are uttered generally by young and thoughtless officers, and an order from Headquarters forbidding such expressions would do much good.”<sup>89</sup> This correspondence offers an interesting view of the administration’s thoughts on race relations. While the McKinley administration was fully participating in the white supremacy ideology of the day, at least one of their Generals recognized the harm this attitude did to the cause of Philippine occupation. The administration ultimately did not formally stop the pervasive use of racial slurs by US soldiers, but General Wheeler’s letter indicates a self-awareness to the racial thinking of the conflict and occupation.<sup>90</sup>

As was the case during the struggles in the Western territories between Americans and Native Americans, the United States blamed the “lesser” and “savage” race for the violence of the Philippine conflict. When the atrocities taking place in the Philippines were brought to light, the administration attributed the violence to the savagery of the Filipino combatants and the Filipino Macabebe troops that were serving alongside American units. As historian Paul A. Kramer points out, atrocities committed by Americans were explained as cases where “‘civilized’ men might reluctantly adopt ‘savage’ methods to defeat savages.”<sup>91</sup> Whether through claiming that American soldiers were only “emulating” Filipinos in the use of the water-cure

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<sup>88</sup> Wheeler to William McKinley, 1/1/1900, Reel 9, William McKinley Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>89</sup> Wheeler to William McKinley, 1/1/1900.

<sup>90</sup> For more on race during the Philippine-American War see Welch’s article “American Atrocities in the Philippines” (241-243) and Kramer’s “Race-Making and Colonial Violence.”

<sup>91</sup> Kramer, “Race-Making and Colonial Violence,” 206.

torture, or asserting that only the Macabebe scouts had performed the water-cure, the US army and administration again perpetuated formal, racialized thinking.<sup>92</sup>

Americans' views on the racial supremacy of Anglo-Americans and the inferiority of non-white races did not change from the beginning of the Spanish-American War through the Philippine-American War and American occupation of the Philippine islands. The belief that other races were inferior to white Americans was a widely held, long-standing belief, both before and after the Philippine question. For the administration, pro-expansionists, and anti-imperialists, race was incorporated in their views of the conflict, whether it be to justify or oppose it. Ideas about race played an important role in the United States involvement in Cuba and the Philippines, and these complicated, ingrained notions of racial supremacy and inferiority could not change in the ten years that Americans debated the Philippine occupation.

### **Theodore Roosevelt**

Theodore Roosevelt, president from McKinley's assassination in September 1901 until the end of his first full term in 1908, had outspoken opinions on almost every subject. He clearly and repeatedly expressed his views on race, manliness, and the United States' role on the international stage. Before the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt was a loud supporter of intervention, and he volunteered to fight once the conflict was under way. This enthusiasm did not carry over into the Philippine-American War. While Roosevelt's own imperialistic leanings were evident, he did not fight to make the Philippines a permanent holding of the U.S. or to change McKinley's proposal for the islands.

Roosevelt's own ideas about race were clearly defined, and it is hard to disconnect his views with the later Philippine war and occupation. Before the Spanish-American War brought

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<sup>92</sup> Kramer, "Race-Making and Colonial Violence," 205-208.

Cuba and the Philippines under U.S. control, Roosevelt had already laid out what he viewed as a struggle between “civilization” and “savagery” in his history *The Winning of the West*. The books detailed how Roosevelt viewed American westward expansion, and how Anglo-Americans were destined to inherit the West because they were racially superior. To Roosevelt, the “race-forming” warfare against the Native American population in the Indian Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was essential to making Americans special and even more racially superior than other peoples.<sup>93</sup> Roosevelt detailed every brutal act of violence committed by Native Americans, portraying them to be an innately savage race, compared to white Americans, whose violence “...proved them to be the...most advanced of races.”<sup>94</sup> In the foreword to *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt applied this argument to the Spanish control in the Western Hemisphere. Referring to the Spanish-American War, he stated that the “...expansion of 1898 was but a variant of the problem we had to solve at every stage of the great western movement.”<sup>95</sup> The Spanish, just like the Native Americans, were a lesser race that needed to be expelled to make way for “national growth” and “national greatness.”<sup>96</sup>

Roosevelt’s views on Native Americans and Spaniards could have applied to Filipinos as well. The struggle Roosevelt believed to exist between civilization and savagery was being played out again in the Philippines. Lieutenant General Nelson A. Miles compared the Philippine war to the earlier Indian Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Roosevelt certainly would have seen the connection as well.<sup>97</sup> In a speech in 1902, Roosevelt defined the Philippine-American War as

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<sup>93</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995); Gary Gerstle “Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History* (1999): 1280-1307.

<sup>94</sup> Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 182.

<sup>95</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. *Foreword, Winning of the West*. 1900.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Nelson A. Miles to Theodore Roosevelt, 2/17/1902, Reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“the triumph of civilization over forces which stand for the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.”<sup>98</sup> Roosevelt considered the Filipinos to be “latter-day Apaches,” and so the Philippine War could have become another struggle for civilization and Manifest Destiny, just like *The Winning of the West*.<sup>99</sup> However, in his State of the Unions, Roosevelt made no such claims. His official updates on the situation in the Philippines focused on the creation of civilization in the islands, not the benefit of the experience for Anglo-American soldiers. Rather than conquering, Roosevelt declared, “Now we are civilizing the Indian.”<sup>100</sup>

Other instances of international involvement during Roosevelt’s presidency further reveal his atypical response to the situation in the Philippines. In 1904 his comments regarding the role of the United States in Central and South America, known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, made clear his willingness to engage internationally as a “police power.” However, Roosevelt limited this intervention to the Western Hemisphere. While he briefly mentioned the United States “endeavoring to circumscribe the theater of war in the Far East,” the Philippines were not brought into the discussion. Roosevelt states that “chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation,” but fails to apply this logic to the Philippines situation. Roosevelt praises the intervention in Cuba, but chooses not to include the Philippines as another example of America’s rightful intervention in the name of liberty and civilization.<sup>101</sup> While the Philippines does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Monroe Doctrine, it seems as though it would be mentioned in a discussion of intervention to create a stable, civilized society. While he was making promises to intervene in the Western

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<sup>98</sup> Kramer, “Race-Making and Colonial Violence,” 169.

<sup>99</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 241.

<sup>100</sup> Wertheim, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Philosophy,” 501.

<sup>101</sup> Annual Address, 1904.

Hemisphere to guarantee civilization, Roosevelt sought to downplay the United States' involvement in the Philippines for allegedly the same purpose.

Roosevelt's Papers contain relatively few items on the Philippine question compared to the issue of trusts, the 1902 Coal Strike, and Latin America. During the months following the Spanish-American War, McKinley received numerous letters discussing the Philippine Question. Personal friends, colleagues, newspapermen, and average American citizens wrote to him expressing their opinions on the issue. During his years in office, Roosevelt received many fewer letters regarding the Philippines. Those he did receive mostly dealt with administrative advice and correspondence from his Governor, Taft. Letters from constituents mostly dealt with specific concerns or general praise. A Catholic Bishop expressed that citizens were worried about the handling of Catholic churchmen in the Philippines.<sup>102</sup> One woman wrote to Roosevelt concerning the "fallen women" of the Philippines.<sup>103</sup> Those praising Roosevelt expressed general support for his policies and did not mention the Philippines specifically.<sup>104</sup> For the most part, Roosevelt was hearing from advisors, fellow politicians, and a few concerned or admiring citizens. If he was hearing an overwhelming dissatisfaction amongst the American public concerning American involvement in the Philippines, it is not documented in his correspondences.

Though Roosevelt believed that less civilized countries could and should be governed by civilized powers, he chose not argue for making the Philippines a permanent colony of the United States. Roosevelt had decided that Americans "do not desire to hold foreign

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<sup>102</sup> James A. McFaul, Bishop of Trenton to Roosevelt, 1902, Reel 29, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>103</sup> Roosevelt to Mrs. Lowell, 2/26/1902, Reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>104</sup> H.A. Rand to Roosevelt, 1/18/1903, Reel 32, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Larry to Roosevelt, 7/26/1906, Reel 66, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

dependencies, and do believe in self-government for them," but it is unclear what was giving him this impression.<sup>105</sup> Roosevelt argued for a reduction in the Philippine Tariff in 1907, but he lamented that "It is impossible to awaken any public interest in favor of giving [the Philippines] tariff advantages; it is very difficult to awaken any public interest in providing any adequate defense of the islands."<sup>106</sup> Rather than an overwhelming anti-imperialist surge in opinion, Roosevelt struggled to interest Americans in changing tariff barriers, an issue that just seven years previously Beveridge's constituents felt so strongly about that advisors worried the Republican Party would lose re-election in Indiana. More than anything, it seems as though Americans' apathy, rather than widespread vocal opposition, of the United States "imperialist experiment" convinced Roosevelt to abandon any dreams of a permanent civilizing mission in the Philippines.

### **Politics**

Politics in many ways was central to the Philippine debate, as the pro-expansionists were backing the Republican administrations of William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, and the anti-imperialists in the early 1900s were associated with William Jennings Bryan and the Democrats.<sup>107</sup> While generally viewed as a partisan issue, the support of the two factions was not as simple as Republican vs. Democrat. However, Democrats made anti-imperialism a part of their political platform. Even this national stage for the debate could not maintain the interest of American voters. The Philippine Question and its relation to politics was complicated, but it did not change from McKinley's administration through the end of Roosevelt's.

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<sup>105</sup> Wertheim, "Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy," 508.

<sup>106</sup> Wertheim, "Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy," 509.

<sup>107</sup> See Michael Patrick Cullinane *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2012) for more on Bryan and Anti-Imperialism.



Though the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations clashed with Bryan and the Democrats, Pro-Expansion vs. Anti-Imperialism was not a strictly partisan issue. In 1900, many long-time Republicans wrote Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan to express their agreement with his stance on imperialism. David Ferris, an 80-year-old man who had never voted for a Democrat, pledged his support to Bryan. After explaining his support for Lincoln and abolition in the 1860s he said, “Now I stand on the same ground yet again; but names have changed. I am still a Lincoln and a Sumner and a Seward Republican. A new issue has arisen. Our government of boasted liberty has gone into the atrocious business of conquest and subjugation of crushing out the aspirations for liberty of a weak people asking our friendship.” He added that he was “going to continue to vote the true Republican ticket by voting for Wm. J. Bryan for President.”<sup>108</sup> Another Bryan supporter from Philadelphia intimated that, “I know many Republicans in this city who will cast their votes this year for the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution,” meaning votes for Bryan in the election of 1900.<sup>109</sup> For the election of 1900, the issue of anti-imperialism was important enough to some Americans to change longstanding partisan voting patterns.

It was not just those opposed to the administration’s Philippines policy who crossed long-held party allegiances. Pro-expansion Democrats also expressed their willingness to vote Republican because of the Philippine issue. After his 1900 speech supporting American occupation of the Philippines, Senator Albert J. Beveridge received letters from Democrats expressing support. One Democrat, stressing his patriotism, admired Beveridge’s defense of the

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<sup>108</sup> David Ferris to William Jennings Bryan, 10/24/1900, Box 25, Folder 8, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>109</sup> Charles C. Cochran to William Jennings Bryan, 10/22/1900, Box 25, Folder 8, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

administration's policies.<sup>110</sup> Even as late as 1908, a Democrat expressed great admiration for William McKinley, saying that he did not "expect to live long enough to see such an ideal President again."<sup>111</sup>

While the issue for many raised moral questions worthy of changing a lifetime of party loyalty, it still was considered a party issue for the elections of 1900, 1904, and 1908. The politics of the Philippine debate were not cut-and-dry, but they stayed consistent throughout the period. The victory of the Republican Party in all presidential elections during this period shows that the public was not expressing their dislike for US Philippine policy in great numbers through elections. The elections of 1900, 1904, and 1908 produced similar results. The popular vote for the McKinley vs. Bryan race of 1900 yielded 51.7% for McKinley and 45.5% for Bryan. In 1904, Roosevelt earned 56.4% of the popular vote with the Democratic candidate Alton Parker trailing with 37.6%. In 1908, Roosevelt's successor William Howard Taft won 51.6%, and Bryan received 43% of the popular vote in his final presidential election.<sup>112</sup> While the exact percentages fluctuated, Americans were at least not voting more anti-imperialist as American occupation of the Philippines continued.

In addition to consistency at the polls, the Philippines policy of the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations was unchanging from the beginning of the Philippine-American War until Roosevelt left office in 1908. The language in the State of the Union addresses to Congress about the plan for the Philippines was fixed from the beginning of US occupation to 1908. In 1899, McKinley stated that he did not "recommend at this time a specific and final form of

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<sup>110</sup> W.H. Mitchel to Albert J. Beveridge, 10/15/1900, Box 127, Folder 9, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>111</sup> ??? to Joseph Benson Foraker, 9/26/1908, Box 1, Joseph Benson Foraker Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>112</sup> The American Presidency Project.

government for these islands.”<sup>113</sup> Once the “insurrection” abated, Congress would be tasked with creating “a permanent scheme of civil government.”<sup>114</sup> In 1900, again McKinley expressed desire for “building up an enduring, self-supporting, and self-administering community in those far eastern seas.”<sup>115</sup> After McKinley’s assassination, Roosevelt’s 1901 address spoke to the same goal: “We hope to do for them what has never before been done for any people of the tropics- -to make them fit for self-government after the fashion of the really free nations.”<sup>116</sup> In 1902, Roosevelt announced that civil government had been introduced, and that “the people taken as a whole now enjoy a measure of self-government greater than that granted to any other Orientals by any foreign power...”<sup>117</sup> He also warned of the dangers of moving too quickly towards self-government, a caution he expressed continually throughout his years as president. In 1904, Roosevelt asserted that the Filipinos were not ready for self-government but stated that, “I firmly believe that we can help them to rise higher and higher in the scale of civilization and of capacity for self-government, and I most earnestly hope that in the end they will be able to stand, if not entirely alone, yet in some such relation to the United States as Cuba now stands.”<sup>118</sup> In 1905 he again warned that, “If there has been any error as regards giving self-government in the Philippines it has been in the direction of giving it too quickly, not too slowly.”<sup>119</sup> However, in 1906 Roosevelt turned back to earlier language: “We are constantly increasing the measure of liberty accorded the islanders, and next spring, if conditions warrant, we shall take a great stride

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<sup>113</sup> Annual Address, 1899.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Annual Address, 1900.

<sup>116</sup> Annual Address, 1901.

<sup>117</sup> Annual Address, 1902.

<sup>118</sup> Annual Address, 1904.

<sup>119</sup> Annual Address, 1905.

forward in testing their capacity for self-government by summoning the first Filipino legislative assembly...”<sup>120</sup>

In Roosevelt’s last address to Congress in 1908 his comments were mostly the same: “The Filipino people, through their officials, are... making real steps in the direction of self-government.”<sup>121</sup> He again stressed the danger of moving too quickly in the direction of Philippine independence, and suggested, “no one can prophesy the exact date when it will be wise to consider independence as a fixed and definite policy.”<sup>122</sup> The one difference the 1908 Address offered was the line: “I trust that within a generation the time will arrive when the Philippines can decide for themselves whether it is well for them to become independent, or to continue under the protection of a strong and disinterested power...”<sup>123</sup> This “within a generation” might suggest a rough timeframe for independence, the first of its kind, if it were not followed by the exact sentiments expressed about the Philippines situation from 1899 on. Despite his personal beliefs, Roosevelt continued on the path to Philippine independence that McKinley outlined, however vaguely, in 1899.

A few Americans might have been changing long-standing political affiliations because of the Philippine question, but the electoral and administrative outcomes on the issue were unchanging. In his 1899 State of the Union address to Congress, McKinley laid out the plan for eventual independence when the Filipinos were “ready” for self-government. Even Roosevelt’s imperialistic mindset and worries about moving too quickly did not dramatically alter McKinley’s plan for the Philippines. While eventual self-government with no timeline was

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<sup>120</sup> Annual Address, 1906.

<sup>121</sup> Annual Address, 1908.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

vague enough to have allowed Roosevelt to push back the creation of a civil government and Philippine legislature, Roosevelt chose to continue with McKinley's course.

### **Conclusion**

For Roosevelt to diverge from the plan laid down during McKinley's administration, either to move more quickly to grant Philippine independence or to permanently secure the islands as an American colony, there would have had to have been a call from the public for such a change. However, newspapers continued producing similar material on the subject, and while Americans were passionate in their views about morality, race, and the monied interests, none of these influences were significant enough for the public to maintain interest in the Philippine question.

Even before the end of the Philippine-American War in 1902, the number of letters sent to Roosevelt, Bryan, and Beveridge about the Philippines dropped significantly. As early as 1902, as John Tebbel points out, Americans were "annoyed by the bitter arguments still going on in the newspapers and among politicians" and that "they wished the whole thing would just go away."<sup>124</sup> In 1906, the Anti-Imperialist League accused the American public of being a "partner in crime" to violence due to the apathetic response to the killings of hundreds of men, women, and children by American soldiers.<sup>125</sup> In 1907, when Taft toured the U.S. he found "indifference amongst the people and the press" in regards to the Philippines.<sup>126</sup> While some pro-expansionists and anti-imperialists still displayed the dedication they had at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for many Americans the issue simply faded from their interest. Rather than "domestic anti-

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<sup>124</sup> Tebbel, *America's Great Patriotic War*, 399.

<sup>125</sup> Cullinane, *Liberty and Anti-Imperialism* 176, Moro crater incident.

<sup>126</sup> Wertheim, "Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy," 514.

imperialism trigger[ing] a profound change in Roosevelt's thought," as Stephen Wertheim claims, the opinions of Americans were not significant enough to force the Roosevelt administration to do anything other than play out the gradual self-government agenda laid down ten years previously.<sup>127</sup>

How did the apathy of the public influence future American decisions in the Philippines and in other international policies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century? McKinley and Roosevelt sought only for the United States to maintain the Philippines until they were "ready" for self-government, and within less than 10 years the U.S. established an elected Philippine Assembly. Yet the islands did not gain full independence until after World War II. Could the apathy that Roosevelt ran up against when trying to pass his tariffs have prevented future administrations from attempting to grant Philippine independence sooner?

While the U.S. controlled the Philippines well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Roosevelt and future administrations did not seek to gain more territory. The rapid territorial expansion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended with the Philippines, and while the United States intervened militarily all over the world, the goals of such interventions were different and more clearly defined. The war and subsequent occupation of the Philippines was the United States' only formal imperialist action resulting in an administrative colony.<sup>128</sup> If the American public had shown more interest in the

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<sup>127</sup> Wertheim, "Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy," 516.

<sup>128</sup> Julian Go, "Introduction: Global Perspectives on the U.S. Colonial State in the Philippines," in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003) 4-6. Go makes the distinctions between "formal" and "informal" imperialism and "settler" and "administrative" colonies. The United States' "sustained, direct control over the territory and people" and the Treaty of Paris designating the Philippines as U.S. "property" classifies the U.S. control of the Philippines as formal imperialism. The separate customs, lack of immigration, and "unincorporated territory" status of the Philippines defines it as an "administrative" colony of the U.S. The United States participated in informal imperialism ("the exercise of control by one sovereign state over other nominally sovereign states through various diplomatic, economic, or blatantly coercive strategies") in Latin America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in settler colonialism in the expansion of the United States into Western territory during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the control of the Philippines marks the first large-scale, formal, administrative imperialist colony.

Philippines, would Roosevelt have pushed for permanent occupation? While historians have deemed the “imperialist experiment” of the Philippines unsuccessful in accomplishing the goals of the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, it is unclear whether or not public support could have outweighed the costs of war and the administrative headache to encourage future imperialist exploits.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Frank Hindman Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946* (University of Wisconsin-Madison: 1998) ix-xvi; Julian Go, “Introduction: Global Perspectives on the U.S. Colonial State in the Philippines,” in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003)